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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 000477

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [LE](#) [YE](#)

SUBJECT: SALEH TELLS SYRIAN PRESIDENT TO WITHDRAW TROOPS
FROM LEBANON

Classified By: CDA Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.4 b and d.

1. (U) President Saleh telephoned Syrian President Bashar al-Assad the evening of March 4, advising him to withdraw Syrian troops from Lebanon in accordance with the 1989 Taif Accord. This move followed Foreign Minister Qirbi's statement at the March 3 Arab League Ministerial declaring confidence in the Taif agreement as the basis for solving the current crisis in Lebanon.

2. (U) According to government Arabic daily "al-Thawra," Saleh advised Assad to respond to international pressure by withdrawing Syrian troops from Lebanese territory "quickly" and "in accordance with the Taif Accord" and, "in the interests of Syria, Lebanon and the Arab Nation." Saleh reportedly recommended a speedy pullout to preempt any "pretext to trap or target Syria."

3. (C) Comment: Prior to Saleh's phone call, the ROYG had not been vocal about the current Syrian-Lebanese crisis, and Saleh does not routinely give public advice to other Arab leaders. Following Rafiq Hariri's assassination, Saleh limited his comments to condemning his murder and urging restraint in jumping to hasty conclusions on responsibility (re: Syria). Saleh has been attempting of late to emphasize his role as regional statesman, most notably in the Horn of Africa. Following his phone call to Assad, Saleh's office called CDA at home to alert us to this intervention. CDA informed the caller that the U.S. appreciates Saleh's use of his good offices with Assad and that the Embassy would pass on this information to Washington.
Khoury